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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following claim set replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A filter cartridge ~~having~~ comprising a multilayer pleated filter media, said filter media including ~~comprised of~~ a filter membrane layer, and at least one support layer for the filter membrane layer, wherein said at least one support layer is an expanded polymeric film mesh, wherein

individual pleats of the multilayer pleated filter media have respective elongate pleat axes disposed substantially parallel to a central longitudinal axis of the filter cartridge, and wherein said expanded polymeric film mesh is formed of a dense plurality of generally diamond-shaped apertures associated with each one of said individual pleats, said generally diamond-shaped apertures having respective long and short dimensions; and wherein said expanded polymeric film mesh is disposed such that said long dimensions of said diamond-shaped apertures thereof are oriented substantially transverse to said elongate pleat axes of the pleated filter media.

2. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 1, wherein said filter media includes a pair of said support layers which sandwich said filter membrane layer therebetween.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of ~~claim 3~~ claim 1 or 2, wherein said expanded polymeric film exhibits an open area of at least about 40%.

5. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 4, wherein said expanded polymeric film exhibits an open area of between about 50% to about 60%.

6. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 4, wherein said filter membrane layer and said expanded polymeric film each consists of polytetrafluoroethylene.

7. (Currently Amended) A filter cartridge comprising:

concentrically disposed slotted core and cage members, and
a multilayer pleated filter media positioned in an annular space
established between said core and cage members, wherein
said filter media includes an inner filter membrane layer sandwiched
between a pair of support layers for the filter membrane layer,
wherein each said support layer is an expanded polymeric film
mesh, and wherein

individual pleats of the multilayer pleated filter media have respective
elongate pleat axes disposed substantially parallel to a central
longitudinal axis of the filter cartridge, and wherein
said expanded polymeric film mesh is formed of a dense plurality of
generally diamond-shaped apertures associated with each one of
said individual pleats, said generally diamond-shaped apertures
having respective long and short dimensions; and wherein
said expanded polymeric film mesh is disposed such that said long
dimensions of said diamond-shaped apertures thereof are oriented
substantially transverse to said elongate pleat axes of the pleated
filter media.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of ~~claim 8~~ claim 7, wherein said
expanded polymeric film exhibits an open area of at least about 40%.

10. (Currently Amended) The filter cartridge of ~~claim 8~~ claim 7, wherein said
expanded polymeric film exhibits an open area of between about 50% to about 60%.

11. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 7, wherein said filter membrane layer and said expanded polymeric film each consist of polytetrafluoroethylene.

12 - 15 (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) A generally cylindrical filter cartridge comprising:
an inner core member,
an outer cage member concentrically positioned around said inner core member so as to establish an annular space therebetween, and
multilayer pleated filter media positioned in said annular space established between said core and cage members, wherein said filter media includes a filter membrane layer and at least one expanded polymeric film mesh as a support layer for the filter membrane layer; wherein
individual pleats of the multilayer pleated filter media have respective elongate pleat axes disposed substantially parallel to a central longitudinal axis of the filter cartridge, and wherein
said expanded polymeric film mesh is formed of a dense plurality of generally diamond-shaped apertures associated with each one of said individual pleats, said generally diamond-shaped apertures having respective long and short dimensions; and wherein
said expanded polymeric film mesh is disposed such that said long dimensions of said diamond-shaped apertures thereof are oriented substantially transverse to said elongate pleat axes of the pleated filter media.

17. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 16, wherein said filter media includes a pair of said expanded polymeric mesh as support layers which sandwich said filter membrane layer therebetween.

18. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 16, wherein each of said filter membrane layer and said expanded polymeric film consists of polytetrafluoroethylene.

19. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 18, wherein each of said inner core and outer cage members consists of polytetrafluoroethylene.

20. (Original) The filter cartridge of claim 16, wherein said expanded polymeric film exhibits an open area of at least about 40%.